

The Faithful Steward

A Newsletter of the Holy Orthodox Church in North America

"We are all called to be faithful and wise stewards, ever waiting for the coming of our Lord." LUKE 12:40-46

Saint Brendan the Navigator

Our Holy Father Brendan was a native of Ireland; he was born of a distinguished family in Kerry around the year 485. This was about twenty-five years after the repose of Saint Patrick, the Enlightener of Ireland, and by that time all the Irish had received the Faith of Christ, and the monastic life was especially flourishing among them. Saint Brendan was consecrated to God from infancy, being committed to the care of the aged Bishop Eric, who, as a young man, had been a disciple of Saint Patrick himself. This holy shepherd of Christ's flock sought the help of Saint Ida in the work of the child's upbringing, and throughout his life, Saint Brendan revered this blessed nun as his spiritual mother. As a young man, he was sent, as was the custom, to various monasteries to receive direction from the abbots and

Continued on page 2

CONTENTS

Saint Brendan the Navigator.....	1
Orthodox Christian at the Doctor's ..	1
A Tribute to Father George.....	6
Guidelines For Marriage and Baptism. .8	
Reading Materials For Marriage.....9	
Reading Material For Baptism	9
Obedience To A Priest	10
One Man Returns.....	11
Christian Attitude Toward Passions ..	13
The Mite That Roared	14

The Orthodox Christian at the Doctor's

Peter Bushnow, M.D.

(Published in *The Semandron*, July 24/August 4, 2001)

Among the saints are not a few who were doctors, or otherwise involved in the medical profession. Saint Paul, in his epistle to the Colossians, refers to the holy Apostle and Evangelist Luke as the beloved physician (4:14). The Great-Martyr and Healer Panteleimon was likewise trained in medicine. He is perhaps the most renowned of that company of saints called "unmercenar-ies." These are saints who freely donated their services, often healing spiritual as well as physical maladies. In icons, they are traditionally depicted holding a box or vial in one hand and a spoon in the other. In the company of unmercenar-ies we find three pairs of brothers named Cosmas and Damian, two pairs named Cyrus and John—and the holy women doctors and sisters, Zenais and Philomila.

Illness and bodily suffering have important spiritual implica-

tions. When afflicted with illness, the Christian must turn to prayer and the healing sacraments of the Church. I will discuss a few practical aspects that an Orthodox Christian needs to bear in mind during interactions with modern medical care and its practitioners. In this essay, I use the word physician in its original definition—"person skilled in the art of healing"—to include all the doctors, nurses, therapists, and others who are now so quaintly referred to as "health care providers."

Christians can accept the practice of medicine and the good that it has to offer in healing illnesses, tempering suffering, and comforting the sick. However, as any human endeavor, if the medical art is applied without true spiritual discernment it can lead to excess and evil. Our earthly physicians, for the most part, are trained in a materialistic approach to care for the body and consider it



The Holy Unmercenary Healers

Continued on page 4

other holy monks. Finally, he himself received the monastic tonsure, and was ordained priest.

In later years, Saint Brendan was commissioned by his elders to preach the Word of God. It is recorded that he brought many sinners to repentance, and moved a great number to take up the monastic life. He thus founded several monasteries in Kerry. He also founded a women's convent at Amaghdown, in which his sister Briga became abbess. The Saint's final and greatest establishment was the monastery at Clonfert in Galway. Three thousand monks had Saint Brendan as their spiritual father: some of these were at Clonfert; the others, in the other houses he had founded. He gave them a very austere rule of life to follow in their ascetical struggles. At the bidding of Saint Ita, he also travelled to Brittany, to strengthen the Christians and guide the monastics there.

Saint Brendan is especially remembered as "the Navigator," or "Sea-Voyager," because of his travels on the ocean to unknown lands in the West. In his youth, he had often marvelled at reports of Irish sea-farers concerning the existence of unknown lands lying far-distant over the Great Sea to the west of Ireland. It was further rumored that some of his countrymen had settled in such places. Thus, when he was older, Saint Brendan himself was moved to journey in search of these islands in the West; whether this was a quest for greater quiet and stillness, after he had experienced the many distractions connected with his ministry as spiritual father to a multitude of monastics and layfolk, or else, was a mission to preach the Gospel further afield

and strengthen the faith of whatever dwellers he might find in these distant lands, is not clearly known to us. In any case, he set out with a few other monks in three hide-bound boats. This was a most daring feat, for at that time Ireland was commonly supposed to be the westernmost land of the earth, and no one knew what lay beyond. The monks journeyed far and long at sea, but God did not prosper their mission, for they found no place suitable for human habitation. Saint Brendan was made to realize that he had been wrong in abandoning the spiritual family which had been committed to his care; therefore, with God's help, the voyagers returned to Ireland.

Many years later, when the Saint was already somewhat

**The voyages of
Brendan have all
now ended,
And Brendan is
moored in God's
will as his haven.**

advanced in years, he was visited by an anchorite named Barintus. This monk was returning to his cell after a long sea-journey he had undertaken with his nephew, who was likewise a man of God. Barintus told Saint Brendan of various islands he had seen at sea, and how his nephew had decided to remain behind on one of them to be alone with God in solitude and stillness. Again, the blessed abbot was moved to take up his journey, to

visit the fathers struggling in distant exile, and possibly, if God willed it, to end his days as one of them. After much prayer and fasting, he set out with a crew of monastic companions. This time, the Lord's blessing was with them: they beheld many marvels in the northern ocean, icebergs and strange water-creatures, they visited a number of islands, and even found other Irish monks struggling either as hermits or in small communities in various places. It is recorded in one account that he finally came to an island which he loved above all the others. He cried out, "Here I shall surely stay; this is the place of my rest;" but, just then, an old man who was living there as a hermit made his appearance and said, "God has granted that I live here these thirty years, and He has sent me to you with this message: the man who seeks his own desire is fighting against the will of Heaven. As soon as the ninth hour has passed, start on your journey home, and teach the Irish the Way of Life." Thus, the voyagers chanted psalms with the anchorite, partook of the fruit God had provided for them on that island, and returned to Ireland.

It is certain that Saint Brendan visited Iceland and other northern ports, and, from the description given (in old accounts) of other lands that he saw, it is generally thought that he came to some of the more verdant parts of the Americas. It is also interesting to note, that other Irish monks had preceded Saint Brendan in his travels, and had actually settled in these unknown regions. The ancient chroniclers of Iceland relate that when that island was first colonized by the Norse in 870 (almost

three hundred years after the repose of Saint Brendan), on it were found Irish hermits. It is also recorded that the Icelanders first heard of the existence of America from the Irish, and Icelandic historians write that in a portion of America, which they describe as far west over the ocean from Ireland, and which they called Greater Ireland, was a district colonized by the Irish, where the Christian Faith was firmly established.

Returning to the story of Saint Brendan: he lived and labored for seven more years after his travels, thankful that God had brought him back to Clonfert. He finally fell asleep in the Lord around the year 573, when he was about 90 years old. Though he was old and was slightly ill, he travelled to visit his sister's convent. After celebrating the Holy Mysteries, he commended his departure to the nuns' prayers, retired to rest, and quietly reposed in peace. Though the sisters wished to have their spiritual father buried at their convent, since he reposed there, the Saint's will was that he be buried at his monastery of Clonfert, which was for a long time a great monastic center in Ireland. Saint Brendan was afterwards venerated as one of the "Apostles of Ireland." By his holy prayers, O Christ God, have mercy and save us. Amen

Sources

- Baring-Gould, S. *The Lives of the Saints* (May). London, 1873.
- Attwater, D. (ed.) *Butler's Lives of the Saints* (Vol. II). New York, 1956.
- Duckett, E. *The Wandering Saints of the Early Middle Ages*. New York, 1964.



improper to discuss religious beliefs, prayer, or spiritual issues with patients. Potentially even more dangerous are those who reflect philosophies or beliefs antithetical to Christian practices. It is very important not to overestimate the knowledge, authority and "powers" of an earthly physician. The patient must take an active role in preserving his health (stewardship of the Lord), in praying to God for maintenance or restoration in health, and in struggling with the spiritual illnesses which often exhibit themselves in physical illness, or are exacerbated by them. The patient thus has the responsibility to understand and to use discernment regarding the evaluations and treatments his physicians recommend.

Medical recommendations are often presented to patients with great authority. Many patients feel ignorant about medical subjects and are uneasy questioning someone who wears a white coat and covers the walls with diplomas. Keep in mind that the true physician of our souls and bodies is Christ. To help keep the prescriptions of the earthly physician compatible with those of our Heavenly Father, I offer the following suggestions:

Let your physician know your beliefs. You need not give detailed explanations or religious discussions, but be straightforward and unembarrassed. Many physicians very much appreciate knowing that you have thought in advance about serious illness and death. Tell your physician that you want your family and priest to be involved with praying for you. It is important for your physician to know that you fast. (Fasting is very healthy for the body, but as the foods we eat do

affect the body, fasting may necessitate changes in some medications.) Discuss medication dosage schedules with your physician (and priest) so that you can participate in fasting and the Sacraments as properly as possible.

Do not be afraid to ask your physician questions. Do not be afraid of angering the physician or being viewed as "non-compliant" by asking for more information or deciding not to have specific tests or treatments. Try to reach a clear understanding of what a physician hopes to achieve with a particular test or treatment, and decline this intervention if you do not agree with the goal. (Excellent examples of these distinctions occur with prenatal testing. Some testing may help by identifying problems early and improving treatment before and during delivery, thus helping the baby and family. Testing done

**Honour a physician with
the honour due unto him
for the uses which ye may
have of him: for the Lord
hath created him.**

Ecclesiasticus 38:1

for the purposes of identifying an abnormal child with the expectation of performing an abortion should not be accepted, since abortion is unacceptable.)

Be honest with your physician about accepting or rejecting his advice regarding treatment. Be honest if you are using any other type of remedy. Herbal and "alternative" remedies may interact with medications and treatments. You cannot expect the physician to take responsibility for the outcome of treatments he did not prescribe, but a good physician will not abandon

a patient if, after consideration, the patient declines to undergo a suggested therapy.

Carefully consider the implications of advice regarding therapies, especially ones with a spiritual dimension. The physician has earthly authority and may not have considered (or agree with) Christian understanding of what he advises. There are strong elements of paganism and other non-Orthodox forms of spiritual treatment in many forms of popular psychology, "self-help", meditation and yoga techniques. Be careful accepting advice on "relaxation" therapy, bio-feedback and many forms of psychotherapy, especially hypnosis and "regression therapy." Some relaxation techniques teach patients how to become aware of, and to decrease, the racing heart, rapid breathing and other "fight-or-flight" nervous system responses that can worsen anxiety, pain, and overall health. These can be very helpful. Unfortunately, many therapists suggest images that include pagan beliefs, or reliance on the "inner" strength of a person's own body. If learning to use a relaxation technique, make sure it does not ask you to "empty your mind" or "visualize" scenes with carnal pleasures. Instead, fill your mind with prayer and hope in the strength of the Lord to help you. Repeating a "mantra" is not appropriate; instead repeat the Jesus prayer, read an Akathist, pray. Turn to prayer, Holy Scripture, read the Fathers, and discuss any suggested treatments you are unsure of with your priest.

When faced with hospitalization, remember that we can accept the technological expertise available in hospitals, but always keep in mind that prayer is the most

needed medicine.

Your parish priest should know as soon as possible about admission to the hospital, planned operations and tests. One should not complain of every cough or snuffle, but the Christian does not wait to be on the death-bed before turning to prayer. Those who are ill can benefit much from commemoration at the Proskomidi, at Liturgy and from the other healing Sacraments of the Church.

Never be embarrassed to express your faith and worship: make the sign of the Cross, wear a Cross, have icons in your room, have moleben services in the hospital room, and so on. In preparation for surgery you may be asked to remove all jewelry including your Cross. Because of the electrical equipment used during surgery, you may not wear metal chains or Crosses in the operating room, but should request to be allowed to wear a wooden Cross on a string.

Politely but firmly refuse sacraments offered by non-Orthodox. The modern view of religion is very humanistic and ecumenist. Many hospitals offer "interfaith worship services" and visitation by non-Orthodox chaplains with offers of participation in their sacraments. Ask that your medical records state that you are Orthodox and that you will be served by your priest.

Reject euthanasia, assisted suicide, or any procedures which involve the occult or which are contrary to the teachings of the Orthodox Church.

Consider and prepare the following documents: a Health Care Proxy with Advance Directives, Funeral Instructions, and a Last Will and Testament. In our litigious society, unless something is written

down and signed, in the eyes of the law it doesn't count. Preparing such papers and giving them to your physician is a good way to start a conversation about your spiritual needs and concerns. Hospitals are required by law to ask you to fill out a Health Care Proxy with Advance Directives. It is usually much better to do so prior to a severe illness, when you have time for thought and reflection.

Naming a "Health Care Proxy" means identifying and empowering a person to make decisions about health care if you, the patient, are not able to. Traditionally, this would be the next of kin (spouse, child, parent, and so on) but does not need to be. Especially if there is no obvious person, or there may be disagreements between family members, it is good to formally name a proxy. This document is also called a "Durable Power of Attorney for health care," and should not include financial, child custody, or other directives. The Health Care Proxy document often includes "Advance Directives," documenting your wishes regarding health care in specific situations. In such a document you may specifically address particular interventions (such as euthanasia) which you would refuse under any circumstances. A common type of advance directive is a "Living Will" which (usually) instructs the physician not to use heroic measures (which can be specified) in a situation of prolonged coma or when death is likely despite treatment.

A "Do Not Resuscitate Order" (DNR) is an advance directive which instructs the physician not to attempt resuscitation if the patient is found to be not breathing or heart not beating. Resuscitation is

a series of emergency treatments (artificial respiration, chest compression [CPR], electric shocks to the heart, etc.) used to try to restart the heart or breathing. If it is not performed, a person without a heartbeat will die in a matter of minutes. After successful resuscitation a person will usually require life support machinery (such as a ventilator) for some time afterward. Resuscitation efforts are effective and make sense for many people with reversible conditions such as heart attacks, accident or poisoning victims, but in certain cases, such as patients with advanced cancer or general feebleness, may only serve to prolong the dying process.

After death, the body becomes the property of the next of kin, and they are looked to for instructions on what to do. A document with Funeral Instructions should include specific information declaring your beliefs as an Orthodox Christian, your membership in a particular parish, and your request to be prayed for and buried in an Orthodox manner. While awaiting burial, your body should rest in the church, not in a funeral home. Funeral instructions should specifically reject cremation. Funeral instructions should not be included in the Will. While it may not be legally binding after your death, an explicit statement of your last wishes may help prevent any family arguments or misunderstandings about such arrangements.

"God's grace is as evident in the healing power of medicine and its practitioners as it is in its miraculous cures."

St. Basil the Great

A Memorial to Father George (1938-2003)

On May 8/21, 2003, the feast of Mid-Pentecost and St. John the Theologian, my older brother in the flesh and my son in the monastic tonsure, Father George (Michael Adondakis) reposed in the Lord. He was born in September, 1938. Ten years later he contracted polio. The doctors said the muscle damage was so extensive that he would be bedridden the rest of his life. But Michael's strong constitution and faith in God allowed him to get out of bed and go through school. He was a student body officer in high school and graduated from the University of Utah.

Michael was very active in the local new calendar Greek parish in Salt Lake City, serving as administrative assistant for two of the priests.

His first marriage with Rosemary Georgatos was not successful and ended in divorce. Michael then married Mary Tubbs, a Roman Catholic who was received into the local Orthodox parish by chrismation. Mary became disillusioned with her conversion and was ready to go back to the Roman Catholic Church, since she thought there was more fervor among Roman Catholic faithful than among the new calendar Orthodox. After a visit to our monastery and convent in Brookline MA, she and Michael decided to join the traditional Orthodox Church. Mary was baptized and they started having services in their home. They were constantly pressured by their large family and close friends to go back to the local parish. A nephew of ours by marriage was the rector for

many years. But Michael and Mary were steadfast in their resolution and were able to pass this on to their four children. They tried to have the Divine Liturgy served in their home on a monthly basis. The family petitioned Metropolitan Ephraim for a priest to serve their needs. He told them that only if they had a church building would he send them a priest. It was at this time that Michael and his son Gregory built the beautiful little church of St. George.



Father George (1938-2003)

Michael had several businesses. The most outstanding one was that during the time he and Mary lived in Seattle, they successfully introduced burritos to the Northwest and became a distributor for a Salt Lake burrito firm. The family of this firm, not wishing to share the profit with an outsider, forced him to sell them the distributorship.

Father George had two strong positive qualities. His life was one of physical pain and hardship. He

bore this cross which our Saviour gave him with much endurance and patience. One of our sisters was continually complaining about some physical discomforts she was having. After hearing this over and over again, Michael told her that he could not sleep lying down because of the great pain he had, and could only rest sitting up, but he never complained. He was always upbeat no matter how bad he felt. Whenever anyone asked him how he was, he would always answer fine.

The second strong quality was his hospitality and generosity. Our parents' home was always a place for guests to stay, even for long periods of time, and they were always helping people financially. My brother inherited this godly virtue and put it into practice. His home was like our parents' home and he was a big alms giver. Even towards the end of his life when he didn't have the financial means, he still practiced this virtue, even if he had to borrow the money.

Father George also had his weaknesses. He was argumentative and critical by nature, and would hurt other people's feelings without knowing it.

Because of his polio, he ended up with a bad heart, and near the end of his life he had only part of a lung. He had to live with oxygen supplements. The doctors told him that his system was not ridding itself of carbon-dioxide and that he had only a short time to live. He was dying of carbon-dioxide poisoning. He and Mary thought it would be a big blessing if he would receive the second baptism of the

monastic schema shortly before he died. I went to Utah and tonsured him a monk in the winter of 1998. We drew lots and the name George came out. Michael became Father George and his wife Mary became his sister. He had no plans as living as a monk, but only dying as one. Being a monk was a real struggle for him.

The day before he reposed, Father George had two dreams. The first was that he was in a beau-

tiful place and extremely joyous. He awoke and fell asleep again. This time he dreamt that he was at our Saviour's cross and our Saviour was being taken down from the cross and there was a multitude of angels present. He had Mary call us about 7:30 our time. He spoke to Father Panteleimon and asked him if he was going to die. Father Panteleimon told him it was our Lord's decision. Father George asked me if he should call the family together

and bid them farewell. I told him he had already done that a few times. Our Saviour gave him rest from his labours the following day. He loved his Creator, his Orthodox Faith, his family, and especially the six grandchildren he had. May God grant rest to his soul.

Father Isaac
Holy Transfiguration Monastery



Father Isaac stands beside newly tonsured Father George



Stephanie Adondakis pays respects to her grandfather

Guidelines For The Preparation of Baptism and Marriage In The Church

The annual Clergy Synaxis was held on October 1-3, 2002, presided over by Their Eminences, Metropolitans Ephraim of Boston, Makarios of Toronto, and Moses of Seattle. The issues of baptisms and marriage were discussed by the clergy. It was agreed to uphold and support all the canons of the Holy Orthodox Church in this matter and to observe the following guidelines in all our communities.

We will list the guidelines for the Mystery of Holy Matrimony first:

CONCERNING MARRIAGE

1. Both the bride and groom must be members in good standing in our Church.
2. In all cases the couple should speak to the priest, informing him of their intention of getting married before making any plans about the forthcoming marriage (setting the date, choosing the groomsman or maid or honor, etc.).
3. The couple must attend weekly instruction classes for at least five weeks. The duration of the instructions will be determined by the priest. At the conclusion of these instructions, a wedding petition will be submitted to the ruling bishop. In the Appendix that follows these Guidelines, reading materials appropriate for the instruction classes are listed.
4. In accordance with the traditions of the Orthodox Church, no weddings will be performed on Saturdays, the eve of major feast days, or on fast days.
5. Without exception, the groomsman (*i.e.* the *koumbáro*) must be a member in good standing in our Church.
6. The dress code that applies to all who attend the divine services in our churches applies equally to the entire wedding party, the bride and groom included, and also all the invited guests. This is not an extraordinary request, in that many secular establishments (*e.g.* restaurants, clubs, court rooms, etc.) have very strict dress codes, and those who do not conform are not admitted into the premises. In implementing this dress code, it will prove helpful to include it in the invitations sent to the invited guests, indicating that admittance into the church's nave will not be permitted if the dress code is not observed. Also, a mature and discreet member of the parish—perhaps the church warden—must be appointed to enforce the dress code and to supply appropriate headscarves, skirts and other apparel to guests who arrive inappropriately attired. The assistance of our laity in this matter is essential, since the priest has other matters to attend to at this time. The purpose of the dress code is not simply to add another rule, but to emphasize the Christian belief in the need for modesty of dress and respect for the holiness of the church temple and the sacred rites performed therein.
7. An Orthodox Christian marriage does not simply unite bodies; it consecrates both the souls and bodies of the married couple to one another and to God. Therefore, in the initial instruction classes, the priest will explain to the prospective couple why Orthodox Christian values and priorities differ very basically from the values and priorities of our secular and materialistic society, and why these differences reflect different lifestyles. It will probably be necessary and useful to explain why and how these differences in values and priorities came to be. With much grief, we observe that a wide-spread deterioration of basic Christian values and beliefs is taking place, even among nominally Christian denominations, to a degree unheard of even two or three decades ago in our society. In addition, other denominations of relatively recent origin hold beliefs that are contrary and even hostile to the apostolic faith that the Holy Orthodox Church alone has upheld with fidelity and steadfastness from the time of our Saviour. This fidelity and steadfastness of our Church may be observed especially in the many millions of Orthodox Christian martyrs who have shed their blood and courageously given their very lives for the sacred faith, even in our own times. This heroic spirit of Christian self-sacrifice, unselfishness and confession of the Faith is an integral element of Orthodox Christian marriage also, as exemplified in the very hymnology and prayers heard at the wedding ceremony.

CONCERNING BAPTISM

1. At least one parent of an infant candidate for baptism must be a member in good standing in our Church.

2. A period of instruction will be necessary for the adult candidate for holy baptism. The local presbyter will determine what reading material will be appropriate for each individual candidate and how many sessions of instruction will be necessary. In the Appendix that follows these Guidelines, reading materials appropriate for the instruction classes are listed.

3. Since a great deal of variety and levels of understanding can be found among those approaching holy baptism, the date when this holy Mystery is performed for each candidate will be determined solely by the local presbyter.

4. Without exception, the godparent of the one to be baptized must be a member in good standing in our Church.

5. The dress code that applies to all who attend the divine services in our churches applies equally to this holy Mystery (see Article 5 of the guidelines on Marriage).

The considerations and guidelines that have been provided above should inspire all those approaching holy Baptism or holy Matrimony with the need to embrace fervently the ennobling and saving teachings and traditions of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ.

It is for these reasons, beloved faithful, that our clergy request that these guidelines be observed in our parishes and that any extraordinary circumstances be considered only after consultation with the ruling bishop.

APPENDIX

Reading Materials for Marriage

1. The wedding service itself.

2. *Marriage and the Christian Home*, by Father Michael Henning.

3. *Preserve Them O Lord*, Conciliar Press.

4. *Marriage and Family Life*, St. Vladimir's Press (see especially Homily 19 on I Corinthians 7), Homilies by St. John Chrysostom.

5. *Gender, Men, Women, Sex*, by Frederica Matthews-Green, Conciliar Press. Actually, this book is for young adults before they are making plans for marriage

6. *Marriage As A Path to Holiness: Lives of Married Saints*, David and Mary Ford, St. Tikhon's Seminary Press. [The Foreword has errors and is not worth reading].

Reading Material for Baptism

1. *The Law Of God*, by Slobodskoy.

2. *The Orthodox Church*, by Timothy Ware. History is excellent. Be careful of his remarks concerning Ecumenism and sacraments [mysteries] outside the Church.

3. *The Struggle Against Ecumenism*, Holy Orthodox Church in North America.

4. *Byzantine Sacred Art*, by Constantine Cavarnos.

5. *The Way of A Pilgrim*.

6. *The Life of St. Maximus the Confessor*, Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Brookline, MA.

6. *Orthodox Catholic Union*.

7. *Papa Nicholas Planas*, Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Brookline, MA.

8. *The Teachings of the Holy Orthodox Church*, by Father Michael Azkoul.

9. *Lives of Saints for Young People*, by Lev Puhalo.

10. *On Prayer*, by St. John of Kronstadt.

11. *On the Divine Liturgy*, by St. Germanos of Constantinople.

12. *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments*, by St. Cyril of Jerusalem.

13. *Letters from a Convert*, St. John of Kronstadt Press.

14. *One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism*, Holy Orthodox Metropolis of Boston.

15. *On Fasting*, by Lev Puhalo.

16. *Anchored in God*, by Constantine Cavarnos.

17. *Illustrated Sayings of the Holy Fathers*, Byzantium.

18. *Baptismal Instruction*, St. John Chrysostom.

19. *The River of Fire*, by Alexander Kalomiros.

20. *Against False Union*, by Alexander Kalomiros. Basic reference work on why traditional parishes exist.

21. *The Preaching of the Apostles*, St. Irenaeus of Lyons. Holy Cross Press.

22. *Dance, O Isaiah*, by Constantine Platis.

Obedience To A Priest

By Father Seraphim Johnson

The Christian's single most important task in life is to learn to obey God. Adam fell through disobedience to God, and by his fall brought sin, sickness, and death into the world for all of us. Christ obeyed God in everything throughout His life, even to the point of dying on the Cross, and so triumphed over death and restored us to life. The Scriptures teach us that emulating this obedience is the means by which we become members of God's family, children of God, and have God dwelling in us (John 14:23, Matt. 12:50). Our obedience is the key to our entering God's kingdom (Matt. 7:21), and God is more pleased by our obedience than by any sacrifice we could bring Him. On the other hand, disobedience to God calls down His anger against us (Eph. 5:6) and makes us worthy of punishment from Him (II Thess. 1:8). In the Old Testament we see that every time the people of Israel disobeyed God, they fell into idolatry and were punished by invasions and civil war; when the nation repented and returned to obedience, it was rescued from its enemies.

In the *Ladder*, St. John Climacus devotes one of the early steps to teaching about the importance of obedience in the life of a Christian. In Step 4 he discusses obedience as a confession of faith by the Christian and says that without obedience we will not see the Lord. But it is hard to obey God on our own: how are we to know what He wants from us? The Scriptures and the canons and teachings of the Church give us some general idea

of what He expects from us, but it is often very difficult to see how to adapt those demands to our lives. For this reason St. John advises the monk to find a spiritual father and to live in obedience to him. He says that the monk should look carefully and even critically for his guide, but then once he has chosen him, should obey him without judging him. After picking a guide, the monk should look for his good points, not his faults, and should remember that the elder is to judge the monk, not the other way around.

**We must take
obedience to
God's will
as our
only purpose.**

St. John's advice is clearly directed to the monk, but how far can those of us who live in the world apply it to our lives? We all receive obediences from God in the circumstances of our daily lives: doing our jobs, taking care of the house and the children, attending church—these are all tasks directly from God, and we will receive the reward for obedience if we do them faithfully and without rebellion. In addition, each of us should have a priest who hears our confession, and can serve as our guide in obedience to God when we are unable to understand what God wants in our situation in life. We must

always remember, however, that we and the priest do not live in the carefully controlled atmosphere of a monastery or convent where the novice can be compared to an apprentice being trained in the monastic life by a master. The parish priest cannot know and understand our circumstances as completely as the monastic elder can, so we cannot realistically attempt to live in the same kind of obedience to him that we might see in a monastery. As our spiritual father, the priest can hope that we will listen carefully to what he has to say to us, and he may to a degree expect us to do so, but he cannot demand obedience from those in the world except in the most unusual circumstances. Those who are not monks and nuns have the freedom to follow or to reject their priest's advice, unless they have freely entered into a special relationship with him. Of course, if the priest tells you that you will be cut off from Holy Communion if you do not avoid some sin, you are free to ignore his words and commit the sin; but if you do so, you must not compound your sin by receiving the Mysteries anyway. In this case the priest is not demanding obedience, but rather protecting you from a consuming fire which could hurt or kill you (*cf.* II Cor. 11:30).

We have said that the priest cannot demand obedience from his spiritual children in the world in a normal parish situation, but this does not mean that they could not profit from giving him a degree of voluntary obedience. The priest does not need your obedience, but

it is quite likely that you need to offer it to God through him. The Holy Fathers of the Church are quite clear in teaching that we must ask for guidance of our own free will; otherwise the advice of even the wisest spiritual father can be compared to empty chatter, since it will be unable to take root in one who does not want it. The Fathers also teach that one should enter into a relationship of complete obedience only to a truly discriminating spiritual father, one who by humility has conquered his passions totally. Writing in the eleventh century, St. Peter of Damascus said that there were no such elders in his time because there was no true humility, and Bishop Ignaty Brianchaninov repeated these words in the nineteenth century. Sadly enough, the same thing seems to be true today. Fortunately, the same Fathers give us advice about what we should do when we cannot find a true elder to obey: we must take obedience to God's will as our only purpose, and then through prayer and spiritual reading we must seek to learn God's will for us. We must pray humbly and fervently about every thought and every undertaking, asking Christ to guide us, and we must open our minds and hearts in confession of our sins as often as possible. When we do this, the Fathers assure us that Christ will guide us, both directly in our minds, and also indirectly through the Scriptures, the circumstances of our life, and also through the words and examples of other people, most especially of our priest or spiritual father.

A priest's advice should always be taken seriously, since he has had

spiritual training and experience, and because in his detachment he may be wiser and see the results of our actions more clearly than we can. Certainly some of these factors are also to be found in various kinds of secular counselors and advisors, but the priest also has something else: God's grace. Only the priest has received grace from God to bring the Mysteries and guidance to his flock. Just as God was able to warn Balaam even by means of his donkey (Numbers 22:22-35), likewise many times a priest, even a bad and unworthy one, may be shown by God the answer to a person's needs. A poorly trained priest who calls on God or a sinful priest who is approached in good faith as God's representative can be used by God to give direction to the humble, faithful person who comes to him for help, as was the case when the prophet Samuel was trained in obedience by the unworthy priest Eli (*cf.* I Kings [I Samuel] 2-3, especially 3:1). The very act of approaching the priest in a spirit of obedience calls down God's grace and gives power to the priest's words of advice and direction. Obedience, then, is not something a priest should ask for or insist on from his flock; rather, the flock should want to obey its spiritual father, given it by God. Such voluntary obedience is a true offering to God, Who will reply to it by granting His obedient people His strength for their lives and His enlightenment truly to see and do His will in all things.



One Man Returns

Father Jacob Wojick was born in Westfield, Massachusetts, in 1957. He is a 1975 Westfield Vocational High School graduate with a major in carpentry.

Fr. Jacob was raised as a Roman Catholic, but soon after high school, he met a young Greek lady who belonged to the local Greek Archdiocese parish. She and her fiancée invited him to attend liturgy at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Holyoke, MA. There they introduced him to a friend of theirs that had spent about six months on Mount Athos at the holy monastery of Simonopetra. He gave Fr. Jacob a copy of "The Way of a Pilgrim" with a prayer rope and said, "This is the true faith that Christ gave to His Apostles!"

For the next 14 years with the Archdiocese, Fr. Jacob believed that he had found the true Church of Christ. One day, at a visit to Holy Transfiguration Monastery, a lively discussion occurred between Father's friend from Mount Athos and Fr. Hesychius. The conversation was all in Greek, but Fr. Jacob could tell that his friend had met his match. Within a couple of weeks Fr. Jacob went back to Holy Transfiguration Monastery and spoke with a monk named Fr. Ephraim, who spoke at length about the heresy of ecumenism, but Fr. Jacob's love for his friends at the Archdiocese blinded him. He was told by them things such as, "Don't listen to them, no one can follow the rules that they set, for a space of 13 days they split the church,

and look, we all recite the same creed, don't let them fool you, we are all Orthodox Christians, they are Super-Orthodox and they are making a big mistake by not giving us Holy Communion!"

The next visit to Holy Transfiguration Monastery was in 1992 on the day of St. Cosmas of Aetolia. Fr. Jacob was very impressed with the sermon by Bishop Ephraim. After trapeza, the Bishop spoke privately with Father and friends and cited many reasons that they were following false shepherds. Sadly, only Fr. Jacob returned to the monastery for further investigation and instruction. The Bishop suggested for him to fast, pray for strength for a proper decision, and to read the Church Fathers. Later the same year, the Bishop invited

Father to Holy Nativity Convent for their feastday and Fr. Jacob relates that it was there that he met his future Godfather, Theodore Pappas. At this meeting, Father was complaining how difficult a decision this was for him to convert when Theodore stopped him and said, "We all have difficult decisions to make in life!" He was right. How could he hope for any blessings in his life if he did not have a true bishop to lead him to Christ? Life is full of difficult decisions. It was time to be a, "Rational sheep under a rational Shepherd." Father was baptized the following Holy Thursday. His family did not agree with his actions. One day, while complaining about his family to Mother Thecla at Holy Nativity Convent she told him,

"Instead of complaining about your family, just pray for them and remember that our Sweet Saviour wants them to convert more than you do!" He took her advice, and two or three weeks later he walked in the door after work and his wife said, "I would like for the children and I to be baptized!"

Fr. Jacob and his family reside in Blandford, MA. He works for FedEx Corporation as a truck driver. Diaconissa Alexandra is a Special Needs Teacher and continues her education at Elms College in Chicopee, MA. They have 3 children, Jacob, a Mechanical Engineering student, Elizabeth, a high school freshman, and Anna, a seventh grade middle school student.



Joining Deacon Jacob are his family (Anna, Diaconissa Alexandra, Elizabeth and Jacob) Metropolitan Ephraim and Subdeacon Samuel, Deacon Jacob's Godson



Protodeacon Demetrios Houlares prompts the new deacon

The Christian's Attitude Towards His Passions

By Bishop Ignaty Brianchaninov
(*Ascetical Essays*, Part III)

One must believe that in our forefathers' sin the seed of all the passions was contained and we are born with an inclination to every kind of sin. Therefore, we should not marvel at the appearance and arising of any passion no matter how unusual or strange it may seem.

By reason of the natural characteristics of a person's soul and body, and due to the influence of circumstances, one passion acts and develops with particular strength in one person, whilst in another person it is a different passion that so acts. In one person a particular inclination towards love of money is noticeable. In another it is gluttony. One is captivated by carnal desire, another by a thirst for vain honours. He that is not enticed by any one particular passion ought not to think that that passion is not present within him. Rather, it is only that no occasion has arisen to expose it.

One must constantly be prepared to counteract all the passions. In particular one keeps vigilant watch over the passion which predominates and manifests itself more frequently than the other passions and which disturbs him the most.

The passions which are natural to our fallen nature differ very greatly from the passions which each person has acquired by his own free will. The strength of the second is incomparably more significant than that of the first. Repentance, however, as an all-powerful remedy, given by the

Almighty Physician—God, heals the man who of his own free will makes lawful use of this remedy. It heals him completely of every sinful infirmity.

Certain passions serve as a beginning and cause for other passions. Such are: gluttony, luxury, empty diversions, extravagance, love of money, love of glory, unbelief. Their consequences are: love of pleasure, sorrow, anger, remembrance of wrongs, envy, pride, forgetfulness of God and abandonment of a virtuous manner of life.

The ascetic of Christ
ought to renounce
not only the
completion of sin in
actual deed, but also
the accomplishing of
it with the imagination
and the senses.

In the spiritual struggle one ought primarily to take up arms against principal passions. Their offspring will then come to nought of themselves. He that renounces bodily pleasures, human glory, love of possessions, a life of distraction will not give himself up to anger and sadness; neither will pride or envy hold sway over him. Unhindered he will traverse the path of God's commandments towards salvation, towards a more extensive

knowledge of God which is accessible only to the pure in heart.

By what means are the passions exposed? By thoughts, phantasies and by sinful feelings. Thoughts and phantasies sometimes appear in the mind suddenly; sometimes in the manner of a thief they steal up to it. In like manner do feelings arise in the heart and the body. Sinful thoughts, phantasies and feelings draw one away to the completion of sin in actual deed, or at least to the enjoyment of and captivity by sinful thoughts, phantasies, and feelings, to the accomplishment of sin with the imagination and senses.

The ascetic of Christ ought to renounce not only the completion of sin in actual deed, but also the accomplishing of it with the imagination and the senses. Every passion is made stronger by taking pleasure in it, by fulfilling its illicit demands and the suggestions it makes by means of the hidden movements of the soul.

Passion performed in actual deed or implanted in the soul by sympathising with it and nurturing it over a long period of time, receives mastery over a person. One needs much time, a bloody struggle, the particular mercy of God and His particular aid in order to cast off the yoke of the passions which has been accepted voluntarily and has received dominion over a man, either from his fall into mortal sin or from the unlawful enjoyment of sin in his soul's hidden chamber, which is consecrated to Christ.

Continued in next issue

The Mite that Roared—Holy Nativity of the Theotokos Orthodox Church

By John Peter E. Presson

If St. Nectarios Cathedral in Seattle could be referred to in its early days as the mouse that roared, then perhaps the Parish of Holy Nativity of the Theotokos could have been the “Mite that roared.”

Holy Nativity of the Theotokos Parish was established in 1974 under the auspices of St. Nectarios American Orthodox Church, when Fr. George Macris and a handful of parishioners of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Portland, OR left the Greek Archdiocese due to the ecumenical activities of Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople and Archbishop Iakovos of America. These parishioners were accepted by the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church in Exile under the reign of St. Metropolitan Philaret, and the small house chapel of Holy Nativity Orthodox Mission was established and settled in a small donated house chapel on SE 64th Street.

Upon Fr. George’s retirement in 1988, the parish reorganized as Holy Nativity of the Theotokos Orthodox Church. In spring of 1995, Fr. Constantine Parr was reassigned as rector of the parish, and in the fall of the same year a small Protestant church building on NE 105th and Prescott was purchased, and became the Parish’s new home. Over the course of the last seven years, the Temple has undergone extensive renovation and beautification. A new memorial table and table for the Holy Relics were donated in 1997, as well as a Holy

Friday *kouvouklion* (tomb).

In 1998, extensive renovation was done to the North and South faces of the building, which had undergone substantial insect damage, and new “clerestory” windows were installed. In 2002, new choir stands were constructed and lighting installed replacing the old “ad hoc” structures, as well as new *analogia* for the principal icons of the Church and a new Altar Table. The Church is currently being repainted. A new processional path was constructed in 2003 as well as

choir currently numbering 10 singers, formed in 1997 under the direction of the *psaltis* John Peter Presson, chants a full repertoire of Byzantine liturgical music as well as materials from other Orthodox traditions. There is training for church Chanters and other adult education events; a small bookstore is located in the basement with educational materials and devotional items for sale. Since 1995, when Fr. Constantine was assigned to our parish, he and the hierarchy has guided it through the difficult but important transition to being an American Orthodox parish which celebrates its Greek and Slavic Orthodox heritages. There is a conscious policy of welcome for newcomers, and a general tone of cooperation among the membership.

Holy Nativity of the Theotokos

Parish was born and has developed amid, and to some extent as a part of, dramatic events in the Church history of the mid to late twentieth century. For a community our size, we are growing well, not only in numbers, but under the spiritual guidance of the priesthood. As we stand at the turn of the twenty-first century we can only say of the future what could be said of the past: let all be done for the glory of God.



a wheelchair ramp on the Northeast side of the Temple.

Today, Holy Nativity of the Theotokos Parish is a community of 28 families offering a full cycle of liturgical services. A Vigil is celebrated on Saturday evening and Hours and Divine Liturgy in the morning on Sundays, as well as all the 12 Great Feasts of the Church, major saints days and names days. The parish is now largely financed through pledges. Our parish has a



Metropolitan Moses with parishioners of Holy Nativity of the Theotokos Church



*Chanters John Presson, George Psaromatis, Photios Cooper
and Reader Joseph Koemer*



George Psaromatis elevates the Cross on the church roof



About Our Logo A Divine Confirmation

The cross on our masthead commemorates the miraculous appearance of the sign of the Cross near Athens on Sept. 14 (according to the traditional Orthodox calendar) in 1925. Anti-Orthodox and secularist forces in power in Greece, together with the Ecumenical Patriarchate, had forced the changing of the traditional church calendar in 1924 as a first step toward uniting with the heterodox churches of the West. Shining in the evening sky on the traditional feast day of the Exaltation of the Cross, this extraordinary appearance of the Cross is a divine confirmation of Holy Tradition in the Orthodox Church and of the calendar as one facet of Holy Tradition.

.....

The Faithful Steward is the official newsletter of the Holy Orthodox Church in North America. Under the editorship of Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston, *The Faithful Steward* appears three times yearly, and is delivered free of charge. The expenses of printing and mailing are covered by the Benevolent Missionary Fund. Address correspondence to:

The Faithful Steward
1476 Centre Street
Roslindale, MA 02131-1417

THE DIOCESE NEEDS SUPPORT

“Every good giving and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights” (James 1:17). The perfect gift is the one that only membership in the Church can give: the knowledge of true worship and the grace of the Holy Mysteries. But our era suffers from a famine of truth and the true worship of God. In our weak way, we try to feed those who hunger for God. Your prayers and your donations help the Church in this awe-inspiring ministry. Another way to help is to make a bequest to the Church in your will. Remember that God loves a cheerful giver. Also remember that *The Faithful Steward*, although delivered free of charge to all members of our Church, is in need of your support.



The Faithful Steward

A Newsletter of the Holy Orthodox Church in North America

1476 Centre St
Roslindale, MA 02131-1417